

Wreck of the Young Australian

The Young Australian

The **Young Australian** was a 58-ton side-wheel paddle steamer built in Blackall, UK, by Money Wigram and Sons in 1853. It arrived in Melbourne in March 1854 and steamed to its new owners in Port Adelaide where it was used as a tug and lighter.

The vessel was 29 metres long and 5 metres wide and powered by a side-lever engine of 40 horsepower. This design was popular in early steam ships because the centre of gravity was low in the hull while the output shaft was directly coupled to the paddlewheels.

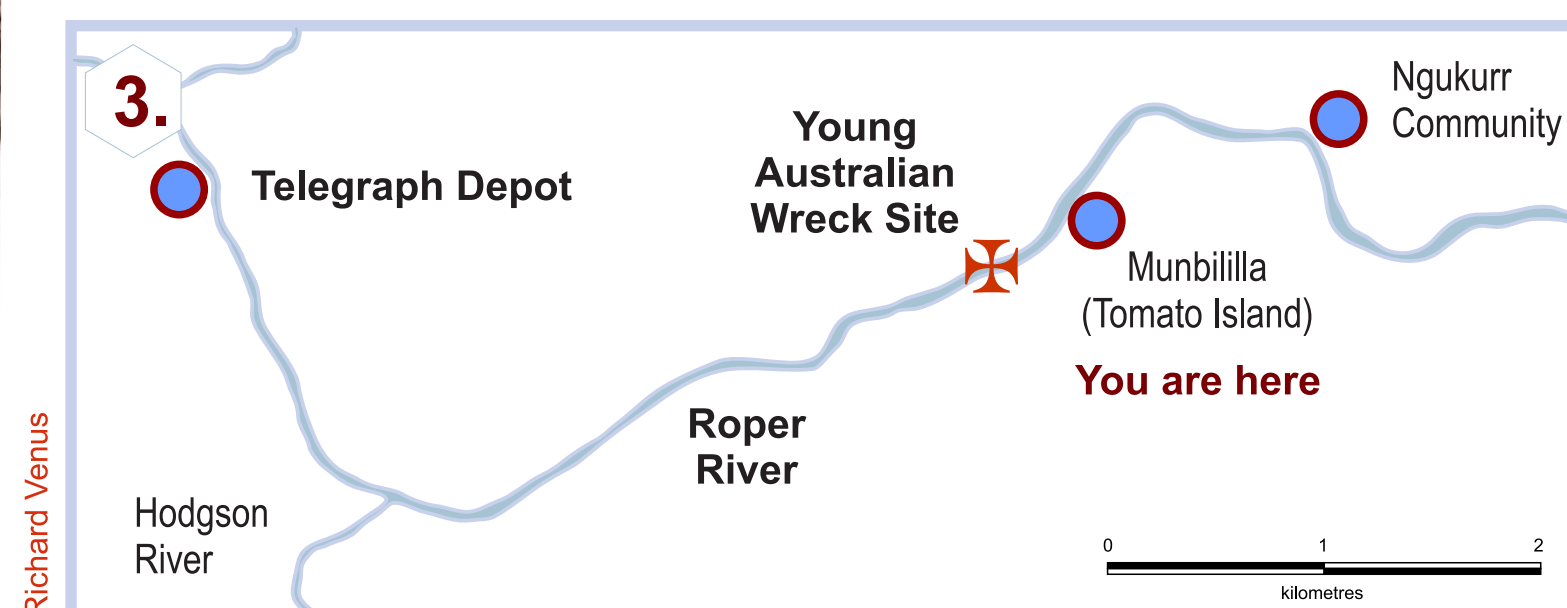
It was purchased by the SA Government in December 1871. **James Lowrie** was engaged as captain and he reached the Roper River on 31 January 1872. The manoeuvrability of the side-wheels made the steamer ideal to ferry stores in the winding river.



Richard Venus



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Owen Peake, Engineers Australia

1. The **Young Australian** at Port Adelaide, 1867 **2.** Map showing the location of the Telegraph Depot and the track to the uncompleted section of the Overland Telegraph Line; clearly, supplying the workers from the Roper made more sense than hauling supplies down from Darwin **3.** Detail showing the location of the wreck in relation to this panel **4.** The **Young Australian** moored in the Roper River in front of the steamer **Omeo**, 1872 **5.** The wreck of the **Young Australian**, 1899 **6.** The boiler of the **Young Australian**, 2011

The Overland Telegraph Line

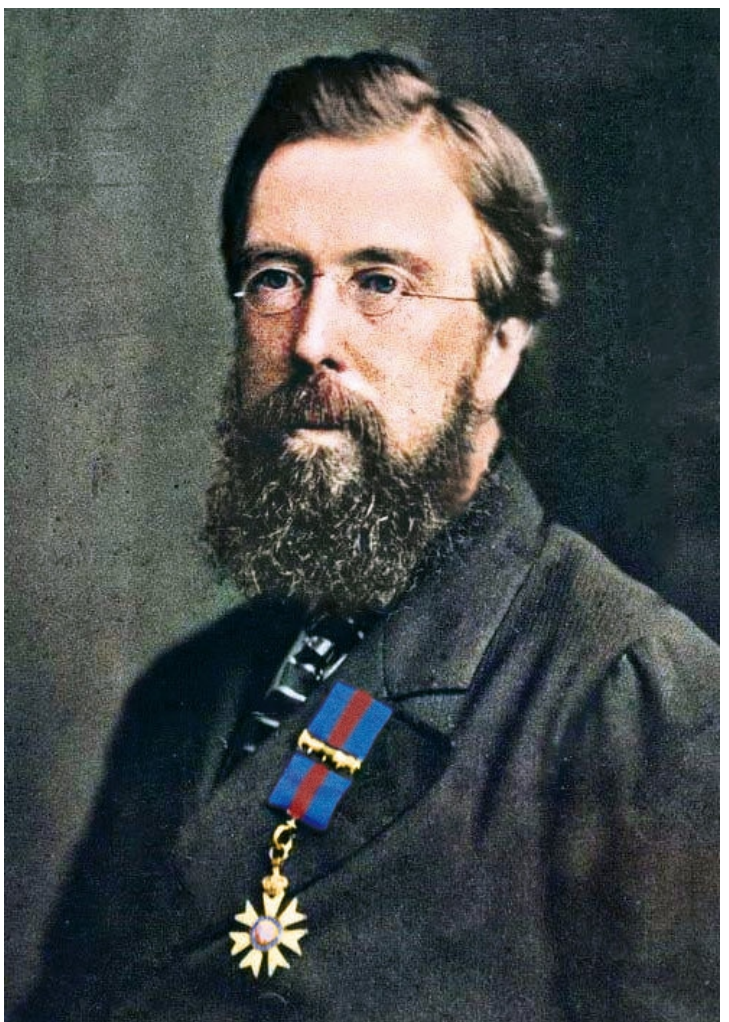
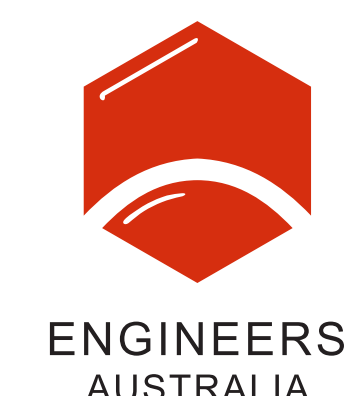
In 1870, the South Australian Government made an audacious offer to the British Australian Telegraph Company (BAT): they would build a telegraph line from Port Augusta if BAT would land their underwater cable from Java (Indonesia) at Port Darwin. The offer was accepted and **Charles Todd**, Superintendent of Telegraphs, had just 15 months to erect 36 000 poles and string 3178 kilometres of line.

Work progressed rapidly on the Southern and Central sections but stopped suddenly on the Northern section when that contract was cancelled. Engineer **Robert Patterson** was given the job of completing the work but, when he arrived in Darwin in August 1871, he found he needed more supplies and reinforcements.

These were despatched in the steamer **Omeo** along with more men. However, because of the Wet Season, work could not resume until April 1872. Patterson completed the work on **22 August 1872**. Meanwhile BAT's cable had failed and wasn't repaired until 20 October.

The Overland Telegraph Line was finally open for service on **21 October 1872** and Australia's communication isolation was ended forever.

This panel replaces the original panel which was installed on 23 May 2011
The opportunity was taken in 2023 to incorporate additional material and illustration



Charles Todd wearing the CMG medal he was awarded in 1872



Robert Patterson

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